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EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE HONORING NATIVE AMERICANS -- (House of Representatives - June 20, 2001)

Washington, D.C. --

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. CARSON).

Mr. CARSON of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to speak in support of House Resolution 168, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA). I would also like to commend the leadership of the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM), the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), and the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) as well for their great interest in this legislation.

Recognition by the Nation's schools of the unique role that Native Americans have played in American history, culture and education is long overdue. In 1994, President Clinton invited all of the tribal leaders in America to the White House, and it was the first such gathering since the Presidency of James Monroe in the 1820s. Similarly, President Clinton was the first President, in 1999, to visit Indian country since Franklin Delano Roosevelt did more than 50 years earlier.

Native Americans have played integral roles in the history and culture of the United States, ranging from Maria Tall Chief from my own congressional district who was the muse of George Balanchine to contemporary novelists like Louise Erdrich, N. Scott Momaday, and James Welch.

The gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM) eloquently spoke of the contribution to our national security of the Navajo code talkers whose contributions to our Nation have only recently been recognized. The code talkers, as she pointed out, used a special code based on the Navajo language to transmit messages rendering all attempts by the Japanese to decipher American battle messages about the time and place of attack futile. Of course they were just working on the history of American Indians in combat.

The Choctaw Indians from Mississippi and Oklahoma had also used their own language as a code during World War I. About 400 Navajos served from 1942 through

1945 as code talkers, taking part in every assault that the U.S. Marines undertook in the Pacific theater. One major was quoted as saying, ``Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima.'

The incredible service of American Indians has certainly not been limited to the Navajo Tribe. In the 20th century, five American Indians have been among those few soldiers to be distinguished with the Medal of Honor, given for military service above and beyond the call of duty. Two of those were from Oklahoma, a Cherokee from Oklahoma and a Creek as well. Also a Choctaw from Mississippi, a Winnebago from Wisconsin, and a Cherokee from the Eastern Band in North Carolina were awarded our highest military decoration. As we approach Independence Day, it is fitting that we now pass House Resolution 168, considering the critical role that Native Americans have played and will play in protecting our country and the principles Americans have adhered to since our own independence.

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